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SOME
REFLECTIONS

UPON
Dean *Sherlock's*

VINDICATION
OF THE
Corporation and Test Acts.

By JAMES PEIRCE. *h*

L O N D O N:

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Dean Abbott's

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OF THE

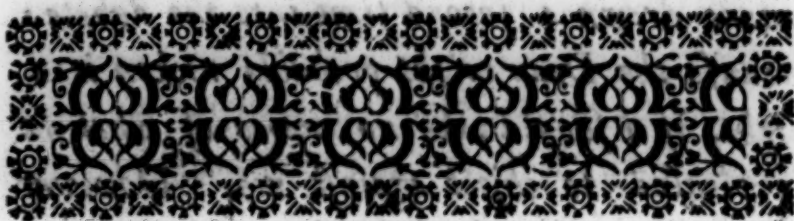
Constitution and T^o of A^o



By JAMES

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Printed by John Clark



THE PREFACE.



HO' the dissenters could not be displeased, when the learned and pious Bishop of Bangor undertook the cause of liberty, and so bravely defended it; yet they were willing enough to be only spectators in this dispute. But it pleased Dr. Snape to reproach them, and myself by name, for not appearing in it. This, I doubt not, will justify my writing a Letter to him upon that subject. And since Dean Sherlock, in his late Vindication of the Corporation and Test Acts, has made some animadversions upon two or three innocent passages in that Letter, I am by this

means drawn a second time into the debate : because the Dean might probably reckon it a slight, if I should take no notice of what he is pleased to object against me. However the reader will find, I *insist* in this Answer only on what relates particularly to myself, or else to the foundation on which the Dean's whole reasoning is built ; without attempting a defence of any particular passages of his Lordship's writings, which he pretends to censure. The world expects this in a little time from his Lordship's incomparable pen ; and that he will finish with his own hand this noble and useful controversy. Nor will any one, I suppose, blame me for waving a defence, which will be shortly made to a much greater advantage.

I know not what truth there may be in some people's suspicion, that the Dean, being now sensible of the disservice which both his own reputation and cause receive by his contest with so great an adversary, is therefore desirous of dropping him ; that he may ingage with one, from whom he may hope to obtain a more certain, if not so glorious a triumph ; and has accordingly pitch'd upon me, as the man. But if
this

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this be his design, my affection to the dissenters, the liberty of the subject, and the interest of religion, will command my best services to attend him. Tho' I must needs say, 'tis great pity the Dean should be so far engaged with any other person, as that his Lordship's side of the controversy should fall into any hands but his own, who is so perfect a master of it; and has both with an inimitable temper, as well as strength, so near exhausted it.

After I had sent away my papers, the second edition of the Dean's Vindication came out with a Postscript; wherein his worthy friend in the country makes a reflection upon me. He mentions a clause, that was inserted by the court party, in the Bill for abrogating the Oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and appointing of others; whereby receiving the sacrament according to the usage of the church of England, or in any other protestant congregation, was made a sufficient qualification for any office, &c.

From hence, he says, 'tis very plain, that they [the Dissenters] would not refuse

fuse to take it (for offices) in their own congregations, if they could gain that point.

He might have drawn his conclusion with less trouble, with reference to all those dissenters, who used to take it according to the usage of the church of England. For they who would not refuse to take it so, would not refuse to take it in their own congregations. With many dissenters 'tis no question, whether it be lawful to take it as a qualification; tho' 'tis with all, whether it may be lawfully imposed, as such.

He adds: And yet that practice would be liable to all Bishop Hoadley's objections.

But the Bishop is not chargeable with any inconsistency, as tho' he pleaded for it. Tho' I dont think this is exactly true; since had the clause been enacted, the dissenters would have been undoubtedly empower'd by it to refuse such as were unfit for the sacrament.

He says: They never made the least objection against the Naturalization Act, when it was in force; which required
foreign

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foreign protestants to receive the sacrament in any protestant congregation; notwithstanding what Mr. Peirce writes.

All the arguments against the Test Act were of equal force against the Naturalization Act, and the dissenters had no reason to object against this particular circumstance of the latter; that when it was resolved to insist upon receiving the sacrament as a qualification, the law did not exclude such as were satisfied to receive it in a protestant congregation, tho' they scrupled to receive it in the church of England. But let the Dean's friend try, if he can find they ever pleaded for the thing in general, or retracted their arguments on that occasion.

Next he transcribes my words: The Parliament did never design to guard against the dissenters by the Test Act, but only against the papists; however the act has been since basely abused [I said, turned against them.] For tho' 'tis true, those who first devised the act, used not to attend our assemblies; yet 'tis well known they were favourers of the dissenters, and friends to our civil liberties.

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ties. The law itself has been censured by dissenters and churchmen, as unjust and ungodly ; and if our adversaries had any regard to the honour of christianity, they would long ago have earnestly solicited the repeal of it.

For what end he sets down this passage, I cannot imagine ; unless it was to take occasion to add his marginal Annotation. For thus he refers to my Book there: Vindication of the Dissenters, pag. 284. Part I. A book which gives the true spirit and principles of the dissenters.

If this be true, I did not miss my aim in writing it ; and the Bookseller has particular reason to own the acknowledgment seasonable ; since he informs me, he is just upon publishing a Second Edition of it.

SOME



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REFLECTIONS
UPON
Dean *Sherlock's*
VINDICATION
OF THE
Corporation and Test Acts.



SINCE Dean *Sherlock* has thought fit to take notice of some passages of mine, in his late *Vindication of the Corporation and Test Acts*; he will not, I persuade myself, be offended, if I defend myself, and examine the strength of his reasonings upon this subject. Should I go distinctly over the several parts of his discourse, which is very long

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and tedious, I should trespass upon the reader's patience, and break in upon the province of one, who is much better able to manage it himself. Nor indeed, is there any necessity of putting myself to that trouble, since his reasoning is sophistical, and he has artfully left out the chief thing, which he ought to have prov'd. And if I make that plain to the reader, I may depend on his excusing me as to any thing else.

That I may not therefore multiply words, I will take the case as he has stated it, and suppose, That the receiving the sacrament *according to the usage of the church of England*, is only the proof, or test, of a man's being well affected to that church: tho' I see no reason why it should not be look'd upon as the qualification for an office; since let a man discover his disaffection to the church as much as he will in other respects, yet he is by so receiving the sacrament qualify'd in the eye of the law for his office; nor is he liable to any penalty for accepting it, provided he has thus qualify'd himself. But to let that pass:

The Dean tells us, p. 15. *The two questions which naturally arise from the true state of the case, are these:*

I. *Whether it be lawful to confine offices of power*

(II)

power and trust in the government, to such as are obedient and well affected to the ecclesiastical state, and constitution of the realm?

II. *Supposing this to be lawful: Whether it be also lawful to require of any man, who is willing to accept an office civil or military, that he should communicate with the establish'd church; and particularly, that he should receive the sacrament according to the usage of it, in order to prove such his obedience and good affection to the ecclesiastical constitution?*

The reader sees here plainly, that the latter of these questions is wholly needless, unless the former is resolv'd in the affirmative. It was therefore the Dean's business, to make that out very clearly. I hope, 'twill appear from what I shall say, that he has rather cunningly wav'd, than attempted it. And if that be true, all his discourse upon the second question is nothing to the purpose.

Let us then examine the method he takes to resolve the former of these questions. Thus then he treats of it, p. 22. *This question will be determin'd by the resolution of two points.*

1. *Whether it be lawful in any case to make laws, by which some persons shall be render'd incapable of offices?*

2. *Whether it be reasonable in the case before us?*

Let the reader compare these two points with the former of the two preceding questions, and he will presently see the principal thing is now left out, and shuffled off. Every one would expect, that according to the first question, he would attempt to prove it lawful and just, to *confine offices to such as are obedient and well affected to the ecclesiastical estate : i. e.* that he would have offer'd at some proof, that a bare difference in religion, whether the civil state be affected thereby, or not, is a reasonable ground of incapacitating men. But this main point is not at all consider'd by him, in his discoursing upon the two questions he proposes.

His first point, which he speaks to, serves only for a flourish; for as he has express'd it, he can't but be assur'd, there is no one denies it: particularly, my Lord of *Bangor*, against whom he is writing, has over and over asserted it in his *Preservative*; and has shewn, that 'tis lawful, in some cases, to make laws, by which some persons shall be render'd incapable of offices. The state has a right to secure itself by incapacitating papists, and all others, who embrace any opinions, whether in matters of religion, or not, which will be prejudicial in their own nature to it. But had the Dean put in the limiting clause, and

spoken

spoken of the incapacitating men merely for a difference in religion, when that difference does not at all affect the state, the very hypothesis which he chuses to argue upon, would have determin'd this point against him. This I will now make out ; the consequence of which will be, That all he has said upon this head, is nothing to the purpose.

The hypothesis the Dean argues upon, he gives us in these remarkable words, p. 23. *As men in a state of nature (for I am willing to argue upon that hypothesis) are upon a foot of equality; so are they when they enter into a formed government, and lay equal claim to all the advantages arising from thence.*

Now such religious tests as the Dean pleads for, are directly contrary to this hypothesis. For if men in a state of nature are upon a foot of equality, they are so with reference to their several respective religions, and no one has any right to prescribe to another any rules therein. And if their entering into a formed government makes no alteration in this case, they must all remain possess'd of the right they had before, and have, notwithstanding their religious differences, an equal claim to all the advantages arising from the government. Nor can those with whom they agree to lodge the governing power, justly incapacitate

pacitate any of them, upon such an account, to receive any of those advantages. The reason of this is : because as this government is founded solely upon the consent and agreement of the parties who enter into it, so it can have no farther power than what was by all agreed to. But it cannot be suppos'd, that men would agree to give up their right to chuse their own religion : nay, if they had done so, yet, since no man has a right to part with his conscience, the contract would have been *ipso facto* void. And if men can't be suppos'd to give the government the power of prescribing to them in matters of religion, they cannot be suppos'd to give them a power of making laws to exclude them from offices, upon the account of the religion which they profess.

I need not be at the trouble of examining what the Dean says in several pages upon this point, since I have now overthrown his foundation. There is only one thing which may seem to look like an argument, and therefore I shall consider it.

'Tis what he says to invalidate the plea drawn from mens *natural* rights, p. 25. *There is not, I presume, a stronger natural right, than the right of food and raiment ; this is founded in the common necessity of nature ; and 'tis not to be*
thought,

thought, that God sent men into the world merely to starve, without giving them a right to use in common so much of it, as their necessities require. But now we see this right is limited and restrain'd by all governments in the world; property is secur'd every where by humane laws; and a very unequal division of the good things of life is introduc'd; the far greater part of mankind live upon their labour, or by charity; hard as this is, yet the necessity of government justifies the provision; and an apostle of Christ has given us a rule in consequence of it: If any man will not work, neither let him eat.

The right men have to food and raiment, must be a right to have them as the fruit of their own labour, or their own possessions. If a thing has no proprietor, any one has a right to use it. But no one has a right to enter upon another's property, to supply himself with food and raiment. Nor do I think the Dean speaks properly, when he says, *this right is limited and restrain'd by all governments*. Property is antecedent to government, and the design of government is to secure property. And if in a state of nature I had occupied a piece of land, which had no antecedent proprietor, and had planted or sown it, no man had a right to come and supply himself with food out of it. And if he attempted to do
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so, I might very justly repel force with force. Nor can *the very unequal division of the good things of life* be justly said to be *introduc'd by humane laws*. This unequal division is properly the effect of mens care or sloth, however humane laws secure mens property therein.

But let us see the consequence the Dean draws from these premises, p. 26. *Is it lawful then to restrain the natural right that every man has to food and raiment? And is it unlawful to limit the capacity which subjects have to places of power and trust in the government.*

The Dean is mistaken in his position, since there is in this case no restraint of any natural right; and therefore 'tis no wonder if his inference does not hold.

He adds: *There is indeed so much compassion and equity left for cases of natural necessity, that in the last extremity we still say, Necessity has no law: but it must be a sad world, whenever avarice and the lust of power obtain the same privilege.*

The Dean has given here a home thrust to the cause he undertakes to defend. For 'tis evident, that nothing but avarice and lust of power can have been the causes of their having monopoliz'd all places of profit and power. Farther, the reader may please to observe, there is a vast difference between the
case

case in dispute, and that which the Dean here argues upon. 'Tis the interest of any government to preserve all its subjects; and therefore in such cases of extreme necessity private rights are justly submitted to the public good: nor can any one have reason to repine at this, since he is liable to be in the same case, and to reap the same benefit by it; whereas the depriving men of their natural rights, merely for the sake of their religion, can be of no service at all to the public.

Having thus shewn the defect there is in this first part of the Dean's reasoning, I might wave all the rest, which is wholly built upon the supposition of the truth of this. But since his way of arguing here is of a piece with the former for its fairness, and he has thought fit to take notice of me, the reader will excuse me if I make some remarks upon his discourse.

Thus then he passes to his second point, p. 30. *But the right of the state to limit the subjects capacity of holding places of power and trust being suppos'd; it still remains to be considered, whether they had sufficient reason for what they did in the case before us.*

The government of England is in the hands of christians; and so far, I hope, there is no fault.

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When they, in whom this power was lodg'd, found it necessary to forsake the errors of the church of Rome, and to throw off the yoke of popish power, under which they had been long oppressed; they saw at the same time, that religion could not be preserv'd without some settled order and discipline.

The order and discipline here refer'd to, cannot, I suppose, mean that which Christ appointed; by which however religion was at first preserved, and kept in a flourishing condition, without any such settlements by the state.

But he goes on, p. 31. *And tho' the reformation claim'd the use of the scriptures as the undoubted right of every christian, who was capable of using them; yet they had sense enough to know, that to leave every man to make the best of his Bible, without any farther direction or restraint, would naturally tend to confusion, and fill the kingdom with all the wild conceits that ignorance and enthusiasm could produce.*

This sentence is to me very mysterious. Whom the Dean means to except by that limiting clause, *who was capable of using them*, I cannot imagine; unless they should be ideots, infants, or such as not being able to read themselves, were so unhappy at the same time at to have lost their hearing, and so could not profit by others reading to them. If these are
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the only ones accepted, all other christians are suppos'd to have an *undoubted right* to the use of the scriptures. What then is this right? 'Tis not, it seems, 'to make the best of their *Bible, without any farther direction or restraint.* Now when a christian has got his *Bible,* he must depend upon the judgment of others for the meaning of it; and when he sees any thing ever so clearly prescribed in his *Bible,* he must not venture to put it in practice, without their consent. How bravely must such a reformation mend the case of the people? What great odds is there between their not being allowed the use of the scriptures, and their not being allowed to judge for themselves, according to the best of their understandings, what is the meaning of them? I suppose no one who is acquainted with the Dean's stile, will think I injure him, when I judge, that his expression of our *reformers having sense enough to know,* is design'd as a reflection, He girds some body, who, it seems, *had not sense enough to know, that to leave every man to make the best of his Bible, without any farther direction or restraint, would naturally tend to confusion.* Since he has not thought fit to speak out, he must leave his readers to guess whom he means. I make no doubt his aim is at my Lord of *Banger*; and the rather, because I

dont imagine he would speak so of our Blessed Saviour, who does not seem to have apprehended any such dismal consequences of mens being left to make the best of their Bible.

He adds: *They considered farther, that it was the will of Christ, that there should be a visible church; and tho' they had withdrawn from the church of Rome, as being corrupt, yet they were obliged to visible communion; for these reasons they continued the national church, freed from the errors and the corruptions of Rome, under a government and discipline formed upon the platform of primitive christianity.*

That 'twas the will of Christ, there should be a catholic visible church, and particular visible churches, I grant; but that it was his will, there should be one *national* church, which the Dean has craftily brought into the conclusion of his reasoning, has not yet been made appear. The Dean will do his cause singular service, if he can shew, that the church government and discipline erected among us, is form'd upon the *platform of primitive christianity*; particularly, if he can shew the choice of bishops, and the various offices established, the way whereby presbyters obtain their livings, and the whole scheme of their spiritual courts, have any resemblance of primitive christianity,
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and especially that which most properly deserves that name.

But to proceed with the Dean: *This church was established by law; and the people of England were bound to communion with it as christian subjects; so bound, I mean, that nothing but a persuasion of errors, and corruptions in the church, could excuse a separation from it.*

When he says they were *bound to communion with the church as christian subjects*, he must mean, by virtue of that subjection they ow'd to the law of the land; but then this is begging the question, and taking for granted what I am sure he has not yet proved, That the government has a power to prescribe a religion to their subjects. However, I am glad he has so explain'd the obligation he speaks of. For if a persuasion of errors, and corruptions in a church, of their prescribing, will excuse a separation from it, the subjects are not then bound by the law, but by their own persuasion; and if this be true, the Dean will do well to let the world know, how he will justify those laws, which punish'd men for not joining in that communion, when they were persuaded there were such errors and corruptions in it.

The Dean, when he comes to shew the reasonableness of the present hardships, which
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the dissenters complain of, gives an account of the troubles there have been in the nation from the time of the reformation, and lays all the load he can upon us ; tho' he does it, as he says, *with reluctance*. But 'tis evident, his account is far from being a fair one. He ought to have faithfully related the tyranny the dissenters groan'd under, while the bishops proceeded against them with the utmost severity. I have carefully read all the lives of the bishops which Mr. *Strype* has publish'd, and particularly the last, of Archbp. *Whitgift* ; and cannot but be amaz'd, that men, who profess'd themselves protestants and ministers of Christ, could ever be capable of such barbarity. The like I may say of what I have been able to meet with of the lives of Archbp. *Bancroft*, and *Laud*, and many other bishops of those times. And whatever the troubles have been which these disputes have created, 'tis evident they are principally, if not wholly, to be charg'd upon the imposing side. 'Tis as certain, as any thing of this nature can be, that the persons who were harra's'd in those times, were persuaded there were errors and corruptions in the church. This persuasion, according to the Dean, would excuse their separation. Why then were they persecuted for it ? Are not these troubles there-
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fore intirely to be charg'd on the persecuting side?

When he comes to treat of the time of the civil wars, he owns, p. 33. *That religion was not the whole of that unhappy rupture between the King and his people ; that occasion there was for complaint with respect to civil rights.* This is an instance of great candour, as times go. He might have added, that religion was not the begining of that rupture. *But then, says he, 'tis evident to all, that those disputes had ended in the happy confirmation of the subjects rights, had not the pretences of religion and enthusiasm mix'd themselves in the quarrel, &c.* Now this I dont believe, because I esteem the subjects liberty to chuse their own religion, one of their most valuable rights ; and unless religion had interested itself in the quarrel, no confirmation of the subjects rights in a due latitude could have been obtain'd. When the Dean would make use of those troubles as a plea for oppressing the dissenters, he would do well to remember, that his own church can get nothing by it. If those of our side join'd with the parliament in opposing the King, those of his own acted without a parliament in opposing another : and, if I mistake not, religion then also mix'd itself in the quarrel. Nay, and in this happy

happy reign, when there has not been the least ground given for complaint of any injury offer'd to the subjects rights, men have risen up in arms against their sovereign, slaughtering and plundering their fellow-subjects; and if they have not had time for causing as great desolations, as were made by the civil war, in *K. Charles the First's* reign, tis evidently not owing to any want of goodwill to it. Now if the dissenters must be treated with the severity he desires, for the part they acted with the parliament at the head of them; why should not the churchmen be dealt with in like manner, for what they have done without any such motive?

I am far from justifying all that was done in that time, or from vindicating those who deny'd the episcopal party their liberty, or set up a tyranny of their own over conscience. Persecution I abhor, wherever I find it. I wish we were all agreed to give the same thing the same name and character, without making any distinction for the sake of the parties who have used it.

The Dean comes at length to treat of *King Charles the Second's* reign; which he represents as full of goodness and forgiveness, attributing the laws complain'd of to nothing but a design to guard against falling into the
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like mischiefs again. He thinks they could not have done less than they did, and that there was no harm in it. But had he fairly represented the case, he could not have talked at the rate he does. For the cutting off the father, and the expulsion of the son, were the acts of a faction, and could not be charged upon the dissenters in general. It was therefore very unjust to make that a pretence to lay hardships upon them. Besides, they were the people that restor'd the King, and had promises made them beforehand of a quite different treatment, than what they met with. In short, the presbyterians had deserv'd well of the people, in standing up for the subjects rights; and of the King, for bravely opposing the putting his father to death, and for bringing him to the possession of the crown. Nor could there have been the least danger from them, if he intended to maintain the subjects rights and privileges. But the true design of those who were in the secret, was to divide and weaken the protestant interest, and make way for the setting up of popery; and the zealous churchmen were the tools to promote it. Our adversaries upon occasion have been frank enough to own this; however, when it will serve a purpose against us, they can dissemble it. And 'tis remarkable that the

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house which bore so hard upon us, should continue long enough to see and repent their error. And whereas the Dean would lay a great stress upon those words of the Corporation Act: *That notwithstanding all his Majesty's endeavours, and unparallel'd indulgence in pardoning all that is past, nevertheless many evil spirits are still working:* I can't think they are much to be regarded by those, who consider the arts practised in that reign; I mean, the lying stories, and sham plots, that were devised only to exasperate the nation against us. The consequence of all is, that if the severity used towards us at that time was causeless and unreasonable, the continuance of it must be so too.

But the Dean himself starts an objection, p. 37. *But however justifiable this might be upon the close of the troubles, and whilst things continued to be in agitation; yet perhaps it will be said, that now the case is alter'd; the disaffection to the church is abated; and we have nothing to fear from the dissenters, tho' places of power and trust in the government should be lodg'd in their hands.* To this he answers: *I wish this were all true; and am willing to allow, that there are many among them, who are sincere in their professions of moderation.*

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The ready way to cure the *disaffection*, is to treat the dissenters after another manner, than has been used for some years past, I am mistaken, if rigor do's not increase it. I am glad he is pleased to allow, there is any sincerity in the professions we many of us make of moderation. Whether I, who am presently brought in by him, am within this charitable allowance, I can't tell; but can however very sincerely declare, that I heartily love a good man in any party; and that I can as freely converse with men of candor and civility who differ from me, as with those of my own sort; that I have not the least desire, that hardships, or so much as *negative discouragements*, should be used toward any person for a religious opinion, that do's not affect the civil state; and that I desire no kinder treatment from those that differ from me, than I am willing they should meet with at my hands.

He goes on: *But, alas! 'tis one thing to say how we would use power, if we had it; and another to know how to use it, when we have it.*

This observation is very true, and the Dean might have confirm'd it by various instances. There are two which I cant but recollect as very pertinent. The episcopal party, just before the Restoration, were very

forward in declaring how they would use power if they had it, and large promises they made in their distress ; but no sooner had they got the power in their hands, but they quite forgot all, and oppress'd the very men who brought them in. In like manner, when the same party found their own power abridg'd, and themselves in danger, in King *James* the Second's reign, how frank were they in acknowledging the error of their former persecutions ? What protestations did they make of their readiness to come to a temper ? And what promises of the fine things they would do to heal the breach, if ever they had it in their power ? But as soon as their own turn was serv'd, all these were forgotten ; the zealous churchmen oppos'd all attempts for accommodation ; and a toleration could not be obtain'd, large enough to allow us the liberty of teaching schools, to bring up our children in our own way ; and that toleration we had, as scanty as it was, has been envy'd us ever since, and miserably abridg'd of late years.

But the Dean, having made this observation, is for *letting it pass*, tho' at other times he is careful enough to draw consequences from observations far less to the purpose. Since he has omitted it, I beg leave to do
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it for him. Now as his remark is not concerning the dissenters barely, but concerning mankind in general, the natural consequence is this : That as all men have the truest notions of the right use of power, when they are out of it, and are apt to abuse it when they have it ; 'tis the wisdom of any government to limit the use of power according to the notions of those that have it not, and not to regard the fair promises of one or an other party, but to take care that no one party shall abuse power to oppress and injure another. And this will be done, when the civil and natural rights of all subjects are secur'd.

The Dean next asks : *Have any of the dissenters declar'd, that they are for maintaining the church as by law establish'd?*

'Twould be very strange if they should. Can they dislike so many things as they do in the church, and yet be against altering them? The taking away of their natural rights, is probably reckon'd by him one part of the establishment of the church : and can a man be a dissenter, and yet declare he is for maintaining this? But this is consistent enough with the Dean's scheme, who is for incapacitating all that are dissenters.

But let us hear how he answers his own question : *No certainly : the utmost that has been*
pleaded

pleaded in their behalf, is, " That their principles — amount to those of a general toleration to peaceable subjects. " And for this he refers to what I have cited of the *Dissenters last Address*, in my *Letter to Dr. Snape*, p. 33. And thus he discants upon it : *I rejoice in this happy reformation of their principles* : Now for my part, I will not deny that our principles have been reform'd, and that some among us have formerly entertain'd too friendly thoughts of that abomination, which can never be enough expos'd. But does the Dean think this a *happy* reformation? I wish he did ; he would not then retain those principles himself, which we have discarded.

But, says he, let me ask the gentlemen of South Britain, what they are like to get by accepting of a toleration for their religion, instead of an establishment :

By this we may see where we are to look for that *avarice and lust of power*, which the Dean before talks of, as making a *sad world*, when they prevail. The question is not, What is just and equal, but *what is to be got* by any course? But I hope the gentlemen of *South Britain* will be sensible 'tis no despicable gain, when by doing justice in securing persons their natural rights, they get a good conscience, and promote peace among sub-

jects, and strengthen the present government. Nor indeed will any have reason to complain; for a *general toleration* is equivalent to a *general establishment*: and the loss will be only of a power to oppress peaceable subjects and neighbours; which is a loss that neither the Dean, nor any gentleman in *South Britain* should regret.

But he goes on: *and that* [toleration] *too limited to the condition of being peaceable subjects; a condition highly reasonable in itself, but which may be easily expounded away; and probably would be so, unless they could appear to be highly satisfied with their hard bargain.*

How easy is it for a man of the Dean's temper to give an invidious turn to the most harmless and just expressions? Since he owns the *condition to be highly reasonable in itself*, why should he suspect us of any inclination to expound it away? And if such insinuations are allowable what room can there be left for charity? But there was enough in the paragraph, I cited from the *Address*, to guard against this suggestion; and therefore the Dean, according to his usual fairness, did well to put down only a part of it. The words I cited were these:
 “ Our principles are, as we hope, the most
 “ friendly to mankind; amounting to no
 “ more, than those of a general toleration to
 “ all

“ all peaceable subjects, universal love, and
 “ charity for all christians, and to act always
 “ in matters of religion, as God shall give us
 “ light in his will about them. ” Now such
 an expounding away that condition, would
 render our principles not friendly to man-
 kind, and would be inconsistent with univer-
 sal love and charity for all christians, and with
 that liberty which we must be understood to
 suppose belongs to all mankind, as well as our-
 selves, viz. to act always in matters of reli-
 gion, as God gives light in his will about
 them. But he has yet another sting at this
 declaration before he leaves it.

*Besides, says he, this declaration for toleration
 stands only upon the authority of the dissenters Ad-
 dress to the King ; an authority they are not wil-
 ling to abide by in all cases ; and never more com-
 plain, than when they are press'd with a like ar-
 gument, founded upon their Addresses to James the
 Second.*

The case of the dissenters was then very
 peculiar ; a sudden and unexpected de-
 liverance from a long and cruel persecution,
 might transport as wise men as they can pre-
 tend to be, and occasion their using unguar-
 ded expressions of their joy and gratitude. I
 justify none of these ; and they themselves
 soon saw their error. Now 'tis not very ho-
 nourable

nourable in the churchmen to reproach us with these ; since had it not been for them, we could never have needed the deliverance, which proved the temptation. Besides, those *Addresses*, which came many of them from the people, were not all of a sort ; however, the government thought fit to publish those only that were of a pleasing strain, which therefore on that account can't be fairly urg'd against the dissenters in general. But the *Address* I refer to, was the result of the deliberate consultation of the whole body of the dissenting ministers in the metropolis of the kingdom ; nor have I heard of one single person elsewhere, that did not approve of it ; and therefore it may more justly be taken for a declaration of our principles in general. And when the Dean will undertake to justify all his church addresses, which had been presented before that time, and which the dissenters might have alleg'd as their precedents ; or when he will vindicate those, which have come from his party since they have so freely reproach'd us with ours ; I think, I may safely undertake the defence of them. I confess, I should have hardly expected any thing of this nature from one of the *London* clergy, considering the *Address* which they not long since presented, which had too much absurdity

dity, and inconsistency in it, to be soon forgotten.

In the next place he thus reasons against us, p. 39. *The dissenters are still fond of their own principles and opinions: Nor are they, I suppose, at all singular therein. And we have once seen how that fondness transported them, when they had power in their hands. Why then are we not to suppose that they would use power again, if put into their hands, to set up what they account pure religion; and to expel, what not only they, but others of higher rank, and under greater obligations to the church, have treated as popish and superstitious?*

If by setting up, he means doing their utmost by persuasion and argument to promote it, no one doubts they would. But if he means, that they would use any civil power to compel men to embrace what they account pure religion, there is no reason to think they would; because they declare against it, and desire to be themselves, or to have others, intrusted with no such power: and both they, and those of higher rank, are absolutely against the using any external force, or so much as negative discouragements, to expel what they account popish and superstitious, provided only it be not prejudicial to the civil state. Besides, if this argument

ment is of any force against us, it must be so likewise against the church of *England*, as I have shewn already.

The Dean advances another argument against us : *It is well known, that in the late times there was a solemn league and covenant enter'd into by many, to root out the establish'd church of England, and never more to permit its return. At the Restoration, some there were, who left their livings, rather than depart from this engagement. Has their steady adherence to these obligations been blam'd or condemn'd by their brethren of these times ? No ; so far from it, that they have labour'd to adorn the lives and characters of these men ; their sufferings for this cause have been magnify'd and extoll'd ; and they have been represented to the public, as confessors suffering for righteousness sake ; as lights shining in the dark, and of whom the world was not worthy. And now let any body draw the natural consequence from this : Is it reasonable to think, that those who have consecrated their forefathers zeal to destroy the establish'd church, and offer'd up so much incense to it in the eye of the world, do themselves condemn those principles, which they do so adore in others ?*

I frankly own myself one of those who applaud their zeal, and extol their sufferings, which have not, that I know of, been mag-

nify'd by any. I think they deserve all the honourable characters, which have been given of them. And I will venture to say, 'tis the brightest instance of any I have met with of the integrity of clergymen, since the ceasing of the heathen persecutions; that in the year 1662, above *two thousand* together chose rather to part with their livings, than their consciences. But now to consider the thing itself: One of the terms of conformity was, That every minister must renounce the covenant in these words: " I do declare that
 " I do hold, there lies no obligation upon
 " me, or any other person, from the oath
 " commonly call'd *the solemn league and cove-*
 " *nant*, to endeavour any change or altera-
 " tion of government, either in church or
 " state; and that the same was in itself an
 " unlawful oath, and impos'd upon the sub-
 " jects of this realm against the known laws
 " and liberties of this kingdom." There were many of them who had never taken the covenant themselves, and who thought, as I do, it was unlawfully impos'd, and might be in some parts in itself unlawful; but the great thing they all stuck at in this declaration was, that there lay no obligation upon any one from it to endeavour any change or alteration of government in the church. One part of the co-
 venant

venant was in these words : “ That we shall
 “ sincerely, really, and constantly, thro’ the
 “ grace of God, endeavour in our several
 “ places and callings—— the reformation of
 “ religion in the kingdoms of *England* and
 “ *Ireland*, in doctrine, worship, discipline,
 “ and government, according to the word
 “ of God, and the example of the best
 “ reformed churches.” Now as these con-
 fessors knew, that many, who had taken the
 covenant, were convinc’d that the word of
 God was the rule by which the government
 of the church ought to be reform’d, and that
 other churches came nearer to that rule, in
 many things, than the church of *England* ;
 how could they declare, there was no obliga-
 tion upon them from the covenant to endea-
 vour in their places and callings such a re-
 formation ? I put it to the Dean, Whether
 he takes it to be a sin, for any man, with-
 out violence and tumult, but keeping him-
 self quietly in his own place and calling, to
 endeavour an alteration of the government
 of the church of *England*, as ’tis now lodg’d
 in the spiritual courts ? If it be not, why
 might not men, who had taken the covenant,
 be thought oblig’d thereby to endeavour it ?
 If the government of the church in all its
 parts is absolutely perfect, there is no room
 for

for a farther reformation, and the oath to endeavour after one would be unlawful in itself; but since this will not be pretended, I can see no hurt at all in it. Now tho' no oath can bind a man to do an unlawful thing; yet certainly every man is oblig'd to do every lawful thing he is sworn to. And if the Dean will not grant this, he will tempt men to think his zeal, notwithstanding all his pretences, is not so great for the religion of an oath, as to serve a present turn.

He next tells us, p. 40. *It has of late years been a prevailing opinion among some members of the church of England, that the dissenters had worn off their rigid zeal against the church; and that there was little more left in the controversy, than the difficulty about reordination, and the dispute about some indifferent rites and ceremonies.*

I suppose these members of the church of England were they, who were for the *Acts against occasional Conformity and Schism*; and that their grand reason was, that a fresh animosity should be raised, least the breach should be healed.

I have the more reason to think he means these, because in the next words he places Dr. Snape among them. *Among the rest, says he, Dr. Snape seems to have been in this mistake: but by this time I presume he is convinc'd of his error,*

error, since Mr. Peirce has told him, how highly affronting to the dissenters such an opinion of them is :

And here he cites what I say to the Dr. p. 5.

“ How could you suggest, that we dont so
 “ much as pretend the terms of your com-
 “ munion are sinful ? ” Since the Dean has
 said nothing against this passage, I need not
 say any thing in defence of it.

Speaking then farther concerning me, he
 says: *And he goes on to give instances of sinful
 terms of our communion ; and then, in the name of
 all his brethren, he passes a judgment, that makes
 the whole ecclesiastical constitution sinful :* “ You
 “ may depend upon it, that the great body
 “ of the dissenters judge the terms of com-
 “ munion sinfully imposed, p. 6. ”

Which words I readily own, and will justify,
 if there be occasion. And how could men be
 dissenters, if they did not so judge of those
 terms ? This is no new discovery of mine, but
 what he may easily meet with in any of our
 writers. And for my own part, I frankly de-
 clare my own judgment, that unscriptural
 terms cannot lawfully be imposed : and no
 power on earth has a right to make more
 necessary to communion, than Christ has to
 salvation : wherein the Dean knows the dis-
 senters are not singular.

He goes on, making this remark upon my
 words ;

words, p. 41. *This strikes not at one, or at many of our terms of communion, but at the whole establishment: All the unscriptural terms of communion, I grant, it strikes at. The foundation itself is sin, and nothing good can be raised on it.*

If by the foundation he means the principle upon which they act, *viz.* That they have power of adding terms of communion over and above what Christ has appointed; I own the foundation is wrong, and nothing good can be raised upon it; however there may by the same men upon another and better foundation, the scriptures. The superstructure is only so far evil, as 'tis not built upon that foundation.

He adds: *And therefore he very frankly and consistently declares, p. 30: "We rejoice to see the foundations shaken, and the fabric sinking, as we never doubted but it would some time or other."*

This passage, as the Dean has placed it, may easily be misapplied by the reader. I therefore desire he would observe, that I am there speaking against peoples being led by an implicit faith in men; and for their governing their faith and practice by the word of God, as the only rule. I then tell the Doctor: "This is what we have always profess'd, and I am much mistaken, if we are likely
" to

“to be mov’d by any reasons you have
 “brought to the contrary. We cant see the
 “cause of slavery thrives under your manage-
 “ment, which is a mean defence against a
 “noble and brave opposition, We rejoice
 “to see the foundations shaken, &c.” Nor
 can I see, why the Dean should be offended
 either with my *hopes*, or *triumphs*, upon the pre-
 vailing of true and generous principles; espe-
 cially when it is under the management of
 so bright an ornament of his own commu-
 nion.

But to go on, adds the Dean, *he charges the
 church with persecution*: I wish there was no
 cause for the charge. And all who differ from
 the Bishop of Bangor in the present controversy, as
 maintainers of it. Nor has the Dean been able
 to prove they are not.

Agreeable to which, he represents the dissenters
 as the holy remnant, that have not bowed the knee
 to Baal, p. 38. So that the church of England in
 this comparison (and should seem therefore in this
 gentleman’s opinion) is an idolatress; and her
 priests are the priests of Baal.

This is not a just representation of my
 sense; tho’ I dont much complain of him,
 since he has used me much better than he has
 the Bishop of Bangor. Those words have no
 relation to the church of England in particular,

The case is thus: Mr. *Pillonniere* had complain'd of the smallness of the number of those protestants in general, who had gone upon the true and only defensible principle of the reformation; that is, who were against persecution; and among others, he seem'd to me, to reckon the dissenters to be friends to persecution. He express'd likewise his judgment, that the extream smallness of the number of those who were for toleration, and against persecution, was the only reason why the reformed religion did not more prevail in the world. Now when I had asserted that the dissenters declar'd for toleration, I added: " And I hope 'twill be a comfort to him, who complains of the smallness of the number of those, who go upon the true and only defensible ground of the reformation, to hear that God has reserv'd to himself, I dont say seven, but many times seven thousand, who have not bowed the knee, &c. " I did not so much as put in the word *Baal*; and when 'tis added, 'tis evident, that only persecution (which is a great idol with some men) is compar'd with *Baal*. And as one half of those whom Mr. *Pillonniere* commends, as being against persecution, are of the church of England, and must be manifestly join'd with those who have not bow'd the knee; so the charge

charge can't be understood, as brought against the church of *England* in general ; but only against those in that, or any other church, who are for persecution. And therefore his complaint of me here, and again, p. 43. where he renews it, is wholly groundless.

Next the Dean would argue how much more dangerous to the state the dissenters are, than the church of *England*. *The church of England* (says he) *owns itself subject to the civil power, in making canons and constitutions for external government and discipline*: And it would be strange indeed if it did not ; since it owes its very being, as a national church, to the civil power. *Whether the state has reason to like the church the worse for this, let others judge.*

There can be no question, the state, when they think fit to authorize a set of men to make canons and constitutions, must like very well of their being subject to themselves in the matter. But the question is ; Whether Christ has authorized any men to do this ; and whether the state has reason to be pleas'd with those who shew a fondness for it, tho' in a subjection to themselves ; especially when they find that 'tis really an oppression and grievance to the subject. But I dont so much blame the Dean for colloquing and daubing with the state,

in representing the subjection of his church to them ; as I do for his notorious misrepresentation of his neighbours, in what follows.

But those, says he, who are offended at it, may assure themselves, they shall have no such reason of complaint against the dissenters ; they pretend to a power and discipline equally great and extensive, with that claim'd or used by the establish'd church.

This I aver to be an utter falshood ; and therefore call upon the Dean to beg pardon of God, and the world, for publishing it. 'Tis a sign of a very bad cause, when men use such arts as these to promote it. And it has been often a comfort to me to consider, that by such sort of methods our enemies have frequently inflam'd the state against us, and accomplish'd their malicious purposes.

The church of *England* claims a power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith ; a power of making laws and canons concerning things not mention'd in the scriptures ; a power of issuing writs, and forcibly compelling men to answer for themselves in their spiritual courts, and of taking them up and imprisoning them, when excommunicated, and that whether they are members of their communion, or not ;

a power of commuting penances, and changing excommunication into a pecuniary mulct. I might reckon up many other things of the like nature. But any such power, as this, is disclaim'd and abhor'd by the dissenters. They pretend not to impose upon the beleif or practice of any ; they are against any other compulsion, but that of reason and argument ; they pretend not to extend their discipline to any, but those of their own communion ; they think they have no warrant for any proceedings with those of their communion, besides brotherly admonitions, and rejecting them from their communion, in case of their denying the fundamental doctrines of christianity, such as, *That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; the Resurrection, &c.* or in case of plain immorality and wickedness. But fines and imprisonments, as the consequence of the sentence, they detest. They disown the power of making any thing a crime, which the scripture has not determin'd to be so ; and of inflicting any penalty, which is not therein prescrib'd.

But he goes on : *They claim it too independently of the state in every respect ; for they claim it all as the law of Christ, over which no humane power has authority.*

Such a power as I have mention'd, we do indeed

indeed claim, as the law of Christ; and I desire to be inform'd, whether it be not manifestly so? And since he owns that no humane power has authority over that law, I see no reason why we may not claim it independently of the state. The laws of Christ contain a religion, which can be no way prejudicial to the state, and therefore every one, who professes it, has a natural right to be protected, while he acts according to it. Did we pretend, indeed, that by the law of Christ we were warranted to enact laws of our own, independent on the state; or that we were warranted, by our authoritative interpretations and expositions of the laws of Christ, to break in upon mens properties, or any way to disturb the state, 'twere fit we should be restrain'd. But nothing of this nature can be charg'd upon us.

He proceeds: *For this reason Mr. Peirce professes himself, and his brethren, unconcern'd in the Bishop's doctrine, tho' it takes all power from men to make laws in matters of conscience.* " This, " says he, can't do the least prejudice to us. " The government [*mind his reason*] we " plead for, is no other than the execution of " the laws of Christ, p. 22, 23. "

And is not this reasoning sufficiently plain? The Bishop's doctrine, that no men have a
power

power to make laws relating to conscience and eternal salvation, can't in the least prejudice us; because we never plead for any power of making such laws, but look upon all that can be rightfully made, as made already by Christ; and the design of our government is not to make any new laws of our own, but only to execute those we find ready prepar'd to our hands in our *Bibles*. I wish when the Dean's hand was in, he had gone on with his citation a little farther; and he rather, because the following words serve to explain those he has set down, and might have sav'd him the trouble of the disingenuous reflection he has added. Thus then it follows, p. 23. "We pretend not to a power to require more of men than Christ has done, or to inflict any penalties but those that are purely spiritual, that is, to exclude men from our communion, when they act in a manifest contrariety to the laws of Christ. We are not for calling in the civil magistrate, to give virtue and force to our censures. How then can the frame of our government be struck at?" i. e. by the Bishop's doctrine, as Dr. *Snape* pretended. When the Dean read this, one would think he should see, there was no room for the reflection the reader will meet with in his next sentence but one.

And

And since this is their opinion, I'll venture to say for them, that 'tis likewise their opinion, that no power on earth can restrain them in the exercise of any part of that government they plead for.

I grant no power on earth can rightfully restrain us from exercising the laws of Christ. But if under a pretence of executing the laws of Christ, we invade the magistrate's office, or the subject's property, they may justly restrain us. Now follows his reflection.

And without a spirit of prophecy, 'tis easily foreseen, that if ever they have rule, their little finger will be thicker than the loins of the church: the holiness of their government, it being the execution of the laws of Christ, will make them (whatsoever they now think) zealous to impose it upon all.

Men of a strong fancy think they as clearly foresee things, as tho' they had a spirit of prophecy. Whether this be the case of the Dean, the reader may easily judge. He talks of our *having the rule*; whereas we desire not to have the rule, any otherwise than we actually have it; that is, a power of ordering our assemblies according to the best knowledge we have of the laws of Christ. The only thing we desire farther is, that as this rule is not in the least prejudicial to the state, so the state would not discourage us in it; but not-
with-

withstanding what we do herein with a good conscience, permit us to enjoy our natural rights, as well as other good subjects. We are so far from desiring to impose our ecclesiastical government upon others, that we heartily wish the state would take care, not to leave it in the power of any men to impose, by any means, upon their neighbours in such matters. The holiness of our government is to be measur'd by the laws of Christ, which 'tis design'd to execute; but this cannot make us zealous to impose it upon all; because 'tis not agreeable, in our apprehensions, to the laws of Christ to impose it upon any. And one would think this sufficient to satisfy any reasonable man.

The Dean repeats his reflection upon me, for representing the clergy of the church of *England* as priests of *Baal*, which I have already shown to be a mistake. I shall not therefore need to consider the use he makes of it. Only he may please to observe, that the purposes he intimates are to be served, are only the fruits of his own imagination; and 'tis easy to see the state may secure the rights of the subject, and yet guard against any danger from those who are admitted to offices. If the Dean is as willing, as he professes, to have our controversy about conformity determin'd

by reason and argument ; why does he so industriously plead against the removing those hardships which lie upon us, which only serve to hinder mens hearkening to, and weighing impartially the reasons on both sides ?

I have now gone thro' all that the Dean says relating to my self, as well as examin'd the foundation upon which he builds. If what I have said concerning that holds good, there is no need of examining the rest of his discourse, which is built upon it ; tho' I own, I at first design'd to have bestow'd some remarks upon other parts of it, hoping I should have been able to bring things into a narrower compass. But I am the easier in passing them over, since as they are answers to particular passages of the Bishop, his Lordship has promis'd a reply to them. I am not much vers'd in our *Acts of Parliament*, and have therefore omitted to inquire into the arguments advanc'd upon their authority. If the unreasonableness of them be made appear in one case, 'twill be a poor vindication to produce from them any others that are very like to it. If the Dean finds any satisfaction in such reasonings, I am not inclin'd to envy him ; nor will I contend with him about them, it being my resolution to consider what evidence

evidence there is for things from reason and scripture, without any regard to such humane and fallible testimonies.

The Dean in his *Preface* seems concern'd, *not to give a pretence to lovers of scandal to raise a clamour, as if he intended an odious comparison between papists and protestant dissenters.* And indeed, when he shews his resentment of the comparison he only imagin'd I made, between the clergy of the church of *England* and the priests of *Baal*, it would not be very decent in him to compare us with the papists, between whom I have shewn there is not any ground of making a comparison.

But notwithstanding all this grimace, he plainly enough declares in that very sentence, 'twas his judgment, That the *incapacitating laws relating to papists, and those relating to dissenters of all sorts, are founded in one common reason.* And in the body of his *Book*, p. 55. he declares his mind thus: *For my own part, as far as the argument for persecution is concern'd, I make no difference between one religion and another.*

May I not then put to him what he says in his *Preface*, with reference to the Bishop of *Bangor*: *How could he, a christian, a protestant, and a dignified clergyman of the church of England, make that odious comparison, which he would*
not

not be thought to intend, and the charge of which he represents as a clamour, which must proceed from *the lovers of scandal?*

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